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“Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry”: The Companionate Marriage Controversy

[Rebecca L. Davis](#)

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Only a few family members heard the Unitarian minister proclaim them husband and wife in Girard, Kansas, on November 22, 1927. But by the following evening, newspapers from New York to Los Angeles reported that

Josephine Haldeman-Julius, aged eighteen, had wed Aubrey Clay Roselle, aged twenty, a student at the University of Kansas, in a secret ceremony at her parents' home, held a few days ahead of schedule in a futile bid for privacy. Readers learned that neither God's name nor even a reference to God's authority had passed the lips of the minister who officiated at the ceremony. Josephine and Aubrey had not exchanged the traditional Christian wedding vows, nor had the minister asked Aubrey to “endow the woman with his worldly goods.”¹ Instead, Josephine and Aubrey swore their commitment to one another as partners in a “companionate marriage.” As...

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